(No. XXVII.)

THE PASTIME.

SCHENECTADY, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 22, 1807.

ORIGINAL PAPERS.

For the Pastime.

PARALLEL BETWEEN HOMER AND OSSIAN.

TO illustrate the beauties of ancient composition, is a labor which has for many ages employed the ingenuity of the critic; and of all those productions which have come down to our times, none has afforded more ample subject for critical observation, than the writings of Homer.

The most celebrated wits have contended for the laurel, in extolling him with the highest encomium. This needs not excite our astonishment, for he speaks the language of the heart, and will continue to be relished by readers of taste, while man possesses a bosom susceptible of tender impressions.

For a similar reason we glory in the name of Ossian, whose works, though they flourished among a race, barbarous in their manners, and strangers to literature, have yet been conveyed by oral tradition, through a long series of years, and may fitly be ranked with the brightest monuments of human genius.

The productions of both wear alike the stamp of remote antiquity; the same energy and glow of sentiment, the same sublimity of conception, the same pomp and majesty of numbers characterize these incomparable poets and elevate them beyond our praise. In several of their descriptions and similes, a happy coincidence takes place, which cannot fail of highly interesting the liberal enquirer: So that on an impartial reference to circumstances, it will be found difficult to determine which possesses the greatest share of poetical merit.

For artful connection, accuracy of description, and perspicuity of narration, the preference belongs to Homer—but let it be remarked that many of Ossian's poems, not being committed to writing, must have greatly suffered "as they rolled along the flood of time."

That improprieties occur in Ossian, we are ready to admit: Homer may be taxed with imperfections scarcely pardonable. His gods, indeed, frequently pass before us with magnificence and solemnity, but sometimes unhappily descend into the most puerile inconsistencies. On the other hand, the machinery of Ossian is that of nature—constantly abounding with whatever affects us in the beautiful, romantic, gloomy, or tremendous. In the representation of human characters, Homer is unquestionably superior; but the failure of Ossian in this point, arises from the simplicity of those occurrences, his times were capable of affording.

Homer and Ossian.

If *Hector* and *Achilles*, throughout a great part of the Illiad, are eminently distinguished for military prowess, how terminates the career of their glory? The *former* degenerates into a trembling coward, the *latter* into a ferocious and merciless savage.

The fierce, high spirited *Sivaran*, though bound on the field, betrays not a symptom of pusillanimity, while the character of *Fingal* stands unrivalled in the productions of antiquity, and is calculated to fire every breast with the loftiest sentiments of honor, generosity and heroism.

I would not, by what has been advanced, be understood to detract from the merit of the *Grecian bard*:—Three thousand years have elapsed since his poems have ravished the world by their incomparable charms. According to Horace, he conveys instruction more agreeably than the most elaborate treatises on morality. Who can wonder? For, like *Ossian*, he touches every fibre of the heart, and exerts an uncontrouled dominion over the passions.

Hail! bards of other days—to you belong
The matchless beauties of heroic song;
To you the Muse ensures her first renown,
From age to age, 'tis your's to wear the crown.
Sing both:—Endued with more than human fires,
'Tis nature's self your genuine rage inspires—
Still o'er the breast exert imperial sway,
While worlds in rapture lost, attend the lay!
Now *Homer* sings the direful woes of war,
Pelides blazing in his sun bright car,
The fate which hung on Ilion's tott'ring wall,
Brave Hector's glory—and his hapless fall,
Red thunders bellowing o'er th' ethereal way,
And all the Gods embroil'd in mortal fray!
Now *aged Ossian*, fired with former times,
Pours forth his splendid pomp of Celtic rhymes;
The wars and loves of youth—his darling theme,
And Fingal sweeping as the wasteful flame
O'er fields of death—but when his arms prevail,
Propitious, as the summer evening gale,
Now mourns his strain amid the hollow tombs—
The ghosts of heroes, wrapt in awful glooms,
Around the warbling notes unnumber'd throng,
With eager transports, as he pours along—
Or from their nostrils belching fateful blasts,
Ride swift on whirlwinds o'er the pathless wastes,
Or on curl'd clouds an airy voyage take,
Athwart the vale, or down the breezy lake,
Then thro' the dark blue valves of mist unroll'd,
The morning sun displays his locks of gold!
Pride of the Grecian Muse! the *palm* be thine—
On Wit's high throne, with peerless glory shine!
Next—let the bard of Cona's flow'ry vale,
With thee th' alternate notes sublimely swell;

Homer and Ossian.

Still let the might of Hector rule the field,
'Till rous'd Achilles shakes th' immortal shield!
Let *Albion's* hero urge the conflict dire,
Like Loda's terror, girt with storms of fire.
In vain did *Zoilus* point his shafts profane,
Or gloomy *Johnson* snarl with envious spleen;
The butt of public scorn your foes became,
But you the darlings of eternal fame.
While o'er the Trojan plain Scamander glides,
While forests wave on Pelion's tow'ring sides,
While high Ben-Nevis lifts her shelvy brow,
While trembling fires on Heaven's wide azure glow,
So long shall your conspicuous honors blaze,
And Earth's unbounded realms exalt your praise.

For the Pastime.

MR. EDITOR,

With all possible haste, I beg leave to assure the "LOOKER ON,"* that if I have ever written any thing not perfectly consistent with the scriptures, and a *fixed belief* in divine mediation, I am truly sorry. I have deceived myself; and should sincerely thank the man who should set me right. I should never forgive myself, if either my avowed sentiments, or an unfortunate ambiguity of expression, should lead astray a single mind, or shake the "*fetters of religion*," from any man's judgment—But the "Looker On" has shaken off *his* already: Nay—he has abandoned those "religious principles and doctrines" to the "belief of which he was *educated*," and has turned infidel with all the ease of a comedian. He permits the feather, made by himself, to brush away the creed *taught* him by his forefathers—is overjoyed with his success, and would disgrace me by his thanks, as if I were the cause. Such praise grieves me. "I had rather have one scratch my head in the sun, when the alarum were struck, than idly sit to hear *my nothings* monstered." And monstered surely my *nothings* are, when they fall at the mercy of such persons as Mr. Looker On. Pray, sir, why does he talk about being *educated*—and *taught*—since nature has made us so depraved, that all attempts towards virtue are necessarily fruitless. And where is the need of "resisting temptations," of "fasting, prayer and castigation," if without it, we can slip snugly into the seat of the elect, according to the calculations of Mr. Looker On. I have talked about "efforts to be good"—"governing reason and fancy"—"struggles against vice"—"Holy nature" and "Heaven," sir—but this is all trash—sir. We are "villains by necessity—fools by *Heavenly* compulsion—knaves, thieves, and traitors, by spherical predominance—drunkards, liars, and adulterers, by an enforced obedience to planetary influence—and all that we are evil in, is by a DIVINE thrusting on." Let no man

* See Pastime, page 193.

dare to say, that this is all a fetch—"*an admirable evasion of whoremaster-man to lay his goatish disposition to the charge of a star!*" Mr. Looker On was born under "URSA MAJOR." I have done with him. I am the author of the original paper in page 161 of the Pastime. I love the "cerulean sea"—"the cheering beauty of mid-day," and "Holy nature"—am not a Frenchman, a *reformist*, or a New Philosopher;—Nay, sir, I am

NO HYPOCRITE.

EPISTOLARY.

MAJOR ANDRE'S LETTERS TO MISS SEWARD.

Concluded.

CLAPTON, *November* 1, 1769.

My ears still ring with the sounds of oh Jack! oh Jack! How do the dear Litchfieldians?—What did you do while you were with them?—Have patience, said I, poor people!—and began my story, which they devoured with as much joyful avidity as Adam did Gabriel's tidings of Heaven.—My mother and sisters are all very well, and delighted with their little Frenchman, who is a very agreeable lad.

Surely you applaud the fortitude with which I left you!—Did I not come off with flying colors?—It was a great effort, for, alas! this recreant heart did not second the smiling courage of the countenance; nor is it yet as it ought to be, from the hopes it may reasonably entertain of seeing you all again e'er the winter's dreary hours are past.—JULIA, my dear JULIA, gild them with tidings of our beloved HONORA!—Oh that you may be enabled to tell me that she regains her health, and her charming vivacity!—Your sympathizing heart partakes all the joys and pains of your friends.—Never can I forget its kind offices, which were of such moment to my peace!—Mine is formed for friendship, and I am blest in being able to place so well the purest passion of an ingenious mind!—How am I honored in Mr. and Mrs. Seward's attachments to me!—Charming were the anticipations which beguiled the long tracts of hill, and dale, and plain that divide London from Litchfield!—With what delight my eager eyes drank their first view of the dear spires!—What rapture did I not feel on entering your gates!—in flying up the hall steps!—in rushing into the dining room!—in meeting the gladdened eyes of dear JULIA and her enchanting friend!—That instant convinced me of the truth of Rousseau's observation, "That there are moments worth ages."—Shall not those moments return?—Ah JULIA! the cold hand of absence is heavy upon the heart of your poor *Cher Jean*—he is forced to hammer into it perpetually every consoling argument that the magic wand of

hope can conjure up viz. that every moment of industrious absence advances his journey, you know whither.—I may sometimes make excursions to Litchfield, and bask in the light of my HONORA's eyes!—Sustain me hope!—nothing on my part shall be wanting which may induce thee to fulfil thy blossoming promises.

The happy social circle, JULIA, HONORA, Miss S——n, Miss B——n, her brother, Mr. S——e, Mr. R——n, &c. &c. are now, perhaps, enlivening your dressing room, the dear blue region, as HONORA calls it, with the sensible observation, the tasteful criticism, or the elegant song; dreading the iron tongue of the nine o'clock bell, which disperses the beings, whom friendship and kindred virtues had drawn together.—My imagination attaches itself to all, even the inanimate objects which surround HONORA and her JULIA—that have beheld their graces and virtues expand and ripen—my dear HONORA's, from their infant bud.

The sleepy Claptonian train are gone to bed, somewhat wearied with their excursion to Enfield, whither they have this day carried their little Frenchman; so great a favorite, the parting was quite tragical. I walked hitherto from town, as usual, to night—no hour of the twenty-four is so precious to me as that devoted to this solitary walk.—Oh, my friend! I am far from possessing the patient frame of mind which I so continually invoke!—Why is Litchfield an hundred and twenty miles from me?—There is no moderation in the distance!—Fifty or sixty miles had been a great deal too much, but then, there would have been less opposition from authority to my frequent visits.—I conjure you, supply the want of these blessings by frequent letters.—I must not, will not ask them of HONORA, since the use of the pen is forbid to her declining health. I will content myself, as usual, with a postscript from her in your epistles.—My sisters are charmed with the packet arrived yesterday, and which they will answer soon.

As yet I have said nothing of our journey. We met an entertaining Irish gentleman at Dunchurch, and being fellow sufferers in cold and hunger, joined interests, ordered four horses, and stuffed three in a chaise.—It is not to you, I need apologize for talking in raptures of an higgler, whom we met on our road. His cart had passed us, and was at a considerable distance, when looking back he perceived that our chaise had stopped, and that the driver seemed mending something. He ran up to him, and with a face full of honest anxiety, pity, good nature, and every sweet affection under Heaven, asked him if he wanted any thing; that he had plenty of nails, ropes, &c. in his cart—That wretch of a postilion made no other reply than, "We want nothing mas-

ter." From the same impulse the good Irishman, Mr. Till, and myself thrust our heads instantly out of the chaise, and tried to recompense to the honest creature the surly reply, by every kind and grateful acknowledgement, and by forcing upon him a little pecuniary tribute. My benevolence will be the warmer, while I live, for the treasured remembrance of this higglers countenance.

I know you interest yourself in my destiny——I have now compleatly subdued my aversion to the profession of a merchant, and hope in time to acquire an inclination for it—Yet, God forbid I should ever love what I am to make the object of my attention!—that vile trash, which I care not for, but only as it may be the future means of procuring the blessing of my soul—Thus all my mercantile calculations go to the tune of dear HONORA.—When an impertinent consciousness whispers in my ear, that I am not of the right stuff for a merchant, I draw my HONORA's picture from my bosom, and the sight of that dear talisman so inspires my industry, that no toil appears oppressive.

The poetic task you set me is in a sad method—My head and heart are too full of other matters to be engrossed by a draggle-tailed wench of the Heliconian puddle.

I am going to try my interest in Parliament—How you stare! It is to procure a frank.——Be so good as to give the enclosed to HONORA—It will speak to her—And do you say every thing that is kind of me to every other distinguished friend of the dressing-room circle—encourage them in their obliging desire of scribbling in your letters, but do not let them take HONORA's corner of the sheet.

Adieu!—May you all possess that cheerfulness denied to your *Cher Jean.* I fear it hurts my mother to see my musing moods; but I can neither help nor overcome them.—The near hopes of another excursion to Litchfield, could alone disperse every gloomy vapor of my imagination.

Again, and yet again adieu!

J. ANDRE.

LITERARY PARAGRAPHS.

BELCHER & ARMSTRONG, Boston, have just published a second volume of the Miseries of Human Life.

The Pleasures of Human Life, is now in the press, and will shortly be published by Joseph Greenleaf and Oliver & Munroe, Boston.

A Reply to Paine's Age of Reason, written by Robert Thompson, has appeared at Boston.

Mr. Garnerin, the æronaut, commenced his second nocturnal excursion at Paris on the evening of Sept. 24, and had not been heard of on the 28th.

A Miss Gusset has communicated to the "female world," the *highly important* information that 20,651¼ stitches are required to the making of a plain shirt!!

Just published, by Alsop, Brannan & Alsop, New-York, in a neat 8vo volume, with an elegant plate, price $1 25, in boards, a history of the Rev. Hugh Peters, A. M. arch intendant of the prerogative court of Doctors Commons, member of the celebrated Assembly of Divines at the Savoy, Westminster; and principal chaplain to the lord protector, and to the lords and house of commons, from the year 1640 to 1660, with an appendix, by the Rev. Samuel Peters, L. L. D. author of the *burlesque* history of Connecticut.

SCRAPS.

Mr. Fox and Mrs. Montague were conversing one day in her own house on politics. In the course of their conversation the lady grew warm; at last she was so much nettled, by some remarks of Mr. Fox's, that she declared she did not care three skips of a louse for him. Mr. Fox took out his pencil, and produced the following impromptu:—

Says Montague to me, and in her own house,
I don't care for you *three skips of a louse;*
I forgive it, for women, however well bred,
Still talk most of that which *runs most in their head.*

A WISE FOOL!—When Francis I. king of France, was to march his army into Italy, he consulted with his captains how to lead them over the Alps. Amouil, his fool, lying hid in a corner, sprung out and advised them rather to take care which way they should bring them back again!

ORIGINAL POETRY.

For the Pastime.

ODE

Sung at the sixth anniversary of the Belles Lettres Club, New-York, January, 1805.

Swell, swell the cheerful song,
Let echo still prolong
The strains that hail our natal day:
That day, when first with friendship warm'd,
Our hearts this social union form'd.
Full many a year has sped its flight,
While we, with ever fresh delight,
Have well improved youth's roseate hours,
And learning's wreath entwined with flowers:
Exhaustless may our friendship be,
Firm as the rock that braves the sea;
Our solace 'mid a world of strife,
Our shelter from the storms of life.

The Power Supreme, that reigns above,
The great—unwasting source of love,
Approves those virtuous, social ties;
Oh! may they be our boast and pride
As long as life's warm currents glide;
And oft may memory fondly cast
Her mellow beam on pleasures past;
While fancy o'er the future flies,
And gilds our prospects as they rise:

Original Poetry.

Exhaustless may our friendship be,
Firm as the rock that braves the sea;
Our solace 'mid a world of strife,
Our shelter from the storms of life.

Yet pause those notes of joy;
Let grief our hearts employ,
For brothers sunk in death's repose.
But late, like vernal flowers they grew,
So rich, alas! as transient too;
May no unhallowed hand molest
The lowly pillow where they rest;
But morn, with early dew drops lave
The turf that wraps each youthful grave.
Soon as this dream of life is o'er,
We meet again to part no more;
Where, pure as Heaven, shall ever glow
Those fond attachments form'd below.

"The sigh is breath'd, the tear is shed"
Affection's sacred tribute paid,
Again let Mirth her powers resume;
Let Pleasure's soul enlivening smile
With wit and song the hours beguile:
And ever as the sparkling glass
Around this festive board we pass,
With rapture each this wish impart,
The generous offspring of the heart:
Exhaustless may our friendship be,
Firm as the rock that braves the sea;
Our solace 'mid a world of strife,
Our shelter from the storms of life.

For the Pastime.

Written by a young lady, and folded round the roots of a flower presented to a gentleman.

Edwin, view this little flower,
Emblem of man's transient hour—
Now 'tis blooming, soon 'twill die,
And so ere long must you and I.

ANSWER.

What, like the little short liv'd flower,
Bloom and wither in an hour?
Flourish so, and so decay,
Bud and droop and fade away?
Will not wit nor beauty save
From the all devouring grave?
Yet the Spring shall smile again,
Revive the lily of the plain,
Once more shall it blossom there
Smile in triumph, sweet and fair—
So dear Caroline shall you,
Wake again and live anew;
Your bosom's charm old Death defies,
Virtue, virtue, never dies!

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